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Pharr
Economic Development
Corporation

ECONOMIC TIMES

Pharr Celebrates 25th Anniversary and New Status as Third Largest Border Crossing in Texas



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the 4th Quarter Edition of the 2019 Pharr Economic Times Newsletter!

The City of Pharr had an exceptional 2019! On behalf of the Pharr EDC Board, and staff, we thank you for your continued support and business. We wrapped up the year hosting several events in partnership with the community, Workforce Solutions, and PSJA ISD.

Highlights from this newsletter include the 25th Anniversary Celebration of the Pharr International Bridge, Binational Conferences, the 5th Annual Women's Empowerment Conference, and Business Development Seminars.

The Pharr EDC is committed to fostering pro-business, friendly, and high-quality customer service as we support our city's business ventures, partnerships, programs and help our partners in any way we can. On behalf of the Pharr EDC, we thank you for your business!

Sincerely,

Victor Perez

Victor Perez, Executive Director
Pharr Economic Development Corporation



Mayor Hernandez welcomes local leaders as they celebrate the numerous accomplishments for the Pharr International Bridge's 25th Anniversary.

Pharr city officials and the Pharr International Bridge held a press conference to announce major accomplishments and news as the bridge celebrates its 25th anniversary. The Pharr International Bridge now ranks as the third-largest border crossing in Texas, according to WorldCity, a publication that tracks trade data for every airport, seaport and border crossing in the United States.

Among the largest ports for produce in the nation, the Pharr International Bridge has much to celebrate on its anniversary and city and bridge leaders were proud to share an update on its growth, initiatives, and future plans.

"Our Pharr Bridge has accomplished so much in such a few years through our dedicated efforts, strategic partnerships at the federal and state levels, and especially through sound fiscal and infrastructure planning," said Pharr Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D. "We have invested in our bridge by focusing on its growth and capitalizing on our prime international trade location. Our planning is paying off and we could not be prouder of the success and growth our Pharr International Bridge has experienced within the last few years," he added.

Among the bridge's most celebrated accomplishments is its consistent ranking as the #1 Port of Entry in the U.S. for fresh fruits and vegetables. City and bridge leaders have worked together to advocate for funding, infrastructure improvements, cold storage development, and cross-border planning which have resulted in new upgrades, faster crossing times, and cold storage growth in the city, all of which help the bridge remain attractive to produce growers, logistics planners, importers, distributors, and consumers from the United States and Mexico.

"Our efforts have been carefully planned and strategically implemented," stated Pharr Bridge Director Luis Bazan. "Our success is all in the numbers, the leadership, the work, the drive, and the results as we aim to continue being the leader in cross-border trade," he continued. "We are extremely proud of how far we have come as we celebrate our silver 25th Anniversary and are thrilled to share this exciting news and future plans with our citizens, clients, customers, and partners," Bazan said.

While highlighting many of the bridge's accomplishments, officials also revealed two new initiatives they have been developing with various partners:

Ag Internships Program with CBP, UTRGV, and the Texas International Produce Association (TIPA)

- This regional initiative is the first of its kind and will train future home-grown/home-educated ag specialists and entomologists, as we continue to break import records in the produce industry.

\$35 Million in Port Infrastructure Improvements

- Expect big changes in 2020 as we begin construction of two major projects to expedite trade, increase truck throughput and reduce border wait times. Plans are in the works for more infrastructure and technology improvements and those announcements will be forthcoming in 2020.

In 2018, trade in Pharr totaled \$35.38 billion, setting a record for a third consecutive year, with 35% of trade being exports and 65% being imports.

"I cannot reiterate how proud I am of our amazing bridge team and board, our partners, legislative representatives at the state and federal level, and the bi-national friendships, clients, and business we have forged throughout the past 25 years," said Hernandez.





Pharr Bridge Plays Important Role in Super Bowl Sunday

The Pharr International Bridge, the nation's largest land port of entry for fruits and vegetables, had a tough job ensuring the season's biggest shipment of avocados from Mexico made it to tables all across the nation in preparation for Super Bowl Sunday. According to the Dallas-based trade group Avocados from Mexico (AFM), Super Bowl Sunday is the No. 1 avocado consumption day of the year, with Americans consuming an estimated 105 million pounds of avocados.

The Pharr Bridge continues to expand and is quickly becoming the port of entry of choice in the industry. Most recently, the bridge celebrated moving up in rankings and is now the No. 3 border crossing in the state of Texas and 7th in the nation! "Although we are a fairly "young" bridge, we have been able to accomplish so much in a few years through our dedicated efforts, strategic partnerships at the federal and state levels, and especially through sound fiscal and infrastructure planning," said Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D. "The Pharr Bridge has consistently remained the #1 Port of Entry in the U.S. for fresh fruits and vegetables, something we are all extremely proud of," added Hernandez.

"We hope you enjoy your avocados, even after the Super Bowl, and remember that they probably passed through Pharr, Texas on the way to your home!"

PHARR PRODUCE DISTRICT THRIVES

AS BRIDGE REMAINS #1 PORT OF ENTRY IN NATION

PHARR INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE ANNOUNCES NEW HOURS OF OPERATION

Cars/Passenger Vehicles

Monday - Sunday
6:00 AM - 11:50 PM

Commercial Trucks

Monday - Friday
7:00 AM - 11:00 PM

Saturday & Sunday
7:00 AM - 4:00 PM

The Pharr International Bridge is actively monitoring their daily crossings to ensure it maintains a fast and efficient method of travel for our international customers. New hours of operation have been set until further notice.

This schedule will remain in effect indefinitely. All pilot programs will be reviewed by Bridge staff, trade partners, and relevant stakeholders to discuss feedback regarding the programs, make adjustments if necessary, and possibly plan for other contingencies.

SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SOLD
SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SOLD
SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SOLD
SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SOLD	SALE PENDING

PHARR PRODUCE DISTRICT

LOT 28	LOT 29	SOLD	SOLD
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LOT 28
1502 Produce Drive
96,304 sq. ft.
2.21 Acres
Price: \$120,000/Acre

LOT 29
1402 Produce Drive
94,500 sq. ft.
2.17 Acres
Price: \$120,000/Acre



Nearing capacity, 29 out of the 31 slots have been sold.

- Pharr trade has grown by over a BILLION dollars every year.
- Once fully constructed, we estimated that the Pharr Produce District will be valued at approximately \$50 million.
- The Pharr International Bridge crosses over 70% of the nation's produce.
- In 2019, trade-in Pharr exceeded \$35 billion, growing 6% in imports and 5% in exports.



PARTNERSHIPS & ADVOCACY

Binational and Regional Collaborations



Pictured (l to r): Ramiro Garza - Noble Builders, Mexican Rep, Karina Lopez - Pharr EDC BRE Manager, C.P Carlos Alberto Garcia Gonzalez - Secretary of Economic Development for the State of Tamaulipas, Myrta Tijerina - Pharr EDC Tourism & Events Manager, Victor Perez - Pharr EDC Executive Director, Dalinda Guillen - Rio Grande City Economic Development Executive Director, Rafael Tapia - Alamo Economic Development Executive Director, Edcouch Economic Development Corporation Representative, Hollis Rutledge - Hollis Rutledge & Associates Inc.

Bi-national partnerships continue to be the key to successfully advocating for our region's economic prosperity. Through joint collaborations, the Pharr EDC hosted area economic development organizations along with the Secretary of Economic Development for the State of Tamaulipas, C.P Carlos Alberto Garcia Gonzalez, to touch on current and future initiatives for our border region. Continued discussions aim to increase effective communication for community transparency.



Misión Comercial de Agronegocios y Seminario de Exportación Zacatecas 2019



Myrta Tijerina, Pharr EDC, presents investment opportunities to Mexican Farmers

Through a joint collaboration between the Consulate of Mexico in McAllen and the Zacatecas' Government Field Secretary, the AgroZacatecas Exporta program continues to provide the necessary tools and information to promote exporting opportunities for Mexican farmers. We were excited to once again take part and highlight areas of growth and the consumer potential by using our Pharr International Bridge. Presenters educated attendees on topics covering import and export requirements and accessible resources that would assist in facilitating this process.

School Finance in the 86th Legislative Session



Victor Perez, Pharr EDC Executive Director, welcomes local business and community leaders for TEGAC's update on school policy and community leaders for an update on school policy.

Education is key to further develop our future workforce, and what better way to accomplish this goal than to gather crucial stakeholders and continue working on a positive trend. The Pharr EDC hosted the Rio Grande Valley Partnership and the Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium as they provided school administrators, local business and community leaders, an insight on the legislature's historic investment in public education with an open discussion on sustaining the momentum for our community.

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Pharr EDC obtains leadership and guidance through its board of directors, which represents an array of successful industry professionals who volunteer their expertise to ensure that the Pharr EDC meets the highest standard of excellence.



MAYOR
Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D.
President



Mario Lizcano
Vice-President



COMMISSIONER
Eleazar Guajardo
Treasurer



Reynaldo Perez
Secretary



COMMISSIONER
Ricardo Medina
Board Member



COMMISSIONER
Ramiro Caballero, M.D.
Board Member



Efrain Matamoros
Board Member

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Plaza Comunitaria - Ceremonia de Graduación y Entrega de Libros



Pictured are (l to r): Victor Perez, Pharr EDC Executive Director and PSJA School Board Member, Froylán Yescas Cedillo, Consul of Mexico, Consul Adscrita Consul Socorro Guadalupe Jorge Cholula, and Myrta Tijerina - Pharr EDC Tourism & Events Manager.

Parental programs are essential for the growth of our community and we are proud to support programs that help such efforts. The Pharr EDC partnered alongside PSJA ISD, the Mexican Consulate and the city of Pharr under the "Plaza Comunitaria", an educational development initiative geared towards adults with ambition for advancement. In less than a year since it's opening date, we were honored to witness the first generation of adult graduates in primary and lower secondary education. During the ceremony, the center received a donation of multiple textbooks via an established program through Mexico's Secretary of Public Education Department as an initiative to support bilingual education among both countries. For more information about the Plaza Comunitaria and classes, contact PSJA ISD at (956)354-2028.



5th Annual Women's Empowerment Conference

The Youth is our future! PSJA Sonia M. Sotomayor ECHS strives on providing teen mothers an opportunity to reach their full potential by obtaining their high school diploma, industry certificates, remain college connected and workforce ready. Representatives from Pharr EDC engaged with attendees at the 5th Annual Women's Empowerment Conference to provide an insight on the impact their continued education produced when building a workforce pipeline for employers. Business partner and internship or work experience opportunities are available, let us help you get connected!



The Pharr Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is the primary economic development agency for the City of Pharr.

In Pharr, our goal is to facilitate business attraction and retention, local investments, tourism development, and marketing strategy for our city. By fostering long-term relationships with government officials, industry leaders, and stakeholders in our community, the Pharr EDC examines potential opportunities to develop key industries and promote future economic growth. We also support community development and promote Pharr's thriving economy and superior quality of life.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Pharr EDC Expands Workforce Opportunities for the Disabled



According to the Yang-Tan Institute at Cornell University's analysis of 2016 American Community Survey data, it is estimated that fewer than 40 percent of individuals with a hearing disability work full time. In order to facilitate employer's access to qualified candidates, the Pharr EDC partnered with our friends at the Pharr Memorial Library and Workforce Solutions to raise awareness and provide access to resources for individuals with disabilities for employment opportunities. A Sorenson Video Relay Service station has been installed at our local library for easy access. The SVRS station, now available for use, is a video relay service that allows our community members who are deaf and hard of hearing to communicate with contacts, family and to conduct their scheduled job interviews and other business-related functions by connecting directly with an ASL Interpreter.

Service and access to this station is completely FREE and available at the Pharr Memorial Library, 121 E. Cherokee Ave. Pharr, Texas 78577!

To learn more about this service, or how to take part in this initiative, visit: <https://www.sorenson.com/>

FREE MONTHLY BUSINESS WEBINARS

Offered by SBA & SCORE

SBA WEBINAR *Wednesdays*

Did you know the Small Business Administration offers FREE webinars for small business owners or aspiring entrepreneurs in the convenience of their home or business?

These live webinars are broadcast by SBA's Dallas/Fort Worth District Office each Wednesday at 2:30 pm and are free to entrepreneurs and those contemplating business ownership.

Check out their upcoming webinars, and sign up today
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/webinar-wednesday-series-presented-live-each-wednesday-230-pm-tickets-62508803514>.

UPCOMING WEBINARS:

Plan Your Business

FEBRUARY 26 - Fund Your Business

MARCH 11 - Buy an Existing Business or Franchise

Launch Your Business

MARCH 25 - Pick Your Business Location

APRIL 8 - Sole Prop, Partnership, LLC, C Corp, S Corp - What's It All About?

APRIL 22 - Choose Your Business Name and Register Your Business

MAY 6 - Get Federal and State Tax ID Numbers

MAY 20 - Business Insurance and Why It Matters

U.S. 2020 Census Hosts Job Fair in Pharr



The City of Pharr and the Pharr EDC continue to work proactively throughout the community to ensure a complete count during the fast-approaching 2020 Census by hosting workshops and focusing on community outreach efforts.

In December, the U. S. Census held a job fair the Pharr Development & Research Center. The U. S. Census is still hiring for temporary census positions and encourages anyone interested in applying to attend and learn more about the many opportunities available.

"We are continuing to work with our community to ensure a complete count for the 2020 Census and look forward to building relationships with our community to educate everyone about the importance of being counted," said Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D. "This will affect not only funding for our city but for our schools as well," he added.

BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS

TicketMaster Celebrates 20 Years in Pharr



Ticketmaster has become a pillar in the City of Pharr community, with this year marking their 20th anniversary. Under Live Nation Entertainment, Ticketmaster has been recognized by People as one of the top 50 U.S. "Companies That Care", featuring programs that aim to help employees lead a more balanced professional and personal lifestyle. Ticketmaster offers part-time and full-time employees with growth opportunities beyond customer service, competitive starting wages and great benefits like healthcare, flexible schedules, 401k matching, vacation, tuition assistance and much more. Ticketmaster continues to be a competitive employer and is actively looking for individuals seeking to start or advance their career opportunities. More information can be found by visiting jobs.ticketmaster.com.

Pharr Launches New 311 App

City of Pharr officials are pleased to announce the launch of the city's new 311 mobile application, which will give citizens easy access to government services at their fingertips and the touch of a button. The new Pharr 311 is an interactive mobile application that will allow citizens to easily access critical information from the City of Pharr, including news, calendar of events, online payments, and more.

An exciting feature of the app is the capability to have Pharr citizens become active participants in government services - citizens will be able to report issues of concern in a wide variety of issue areas. Their requests will be tracked and addressed accordingly, and the citizen user will be notified as to the status, and ultimate resolution, of their request.

"In an effort to encourage civic participation among Pharr residents, we wanted to be proactive and effective in communicating with our constituents and addressing their needs," said Pharr Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez.

M.D. "We decided to utilize technology through this mobile app that could provide government services in the palms of our citizens' hands," Hernandez continued.

Some of the features of the application include:

- Report an Issue (general violations, water/sewer issue, streets/sidewalks/lights issues, animal control, traffic concerns, graffiti reporting, crime tips, commending staff, loud noise complaints, etc.)
- Online Payments (for water bills and municipal court fees)
- Police Patrol Request (for citizens leaving out of town for a specific time period that would like extra police patrol)
- Camera Surveillance Registration (register your video surveillance system in the event of a crime committed in the vicinity)
- Alarm Registration (register your alarm system for your home or business)
- Code Red Registration (register to receive news alerts in emergencies)
- Pharr Live TV (watch the city's public access channel live stream)
- and more!

Pharr's 311 app is available for download on any mobile device (smartphone or tablet) from the Google Play Store (for Androids) or Apple App Store (for iPhones and Ipad).



Villita Avocados



City of Pharr based business, Villita Avocados had a busy start to the new year as they prepared for the number one avocado consumption day of the year, the Super Bowl. "With more than 70% of fresh Mexican avocados imported into the U.S. crossing the border through the Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge, Acosta said his company was ready for Super Bowl Sunday." "This may seem like an impossible task, but Villita Avocados and the rest of the industry has invested heavily in the infrastructure — new equipment, processing plants, and logistics — to ensure that we had enough avocados for this prime-time event," Acosta said. "We have a dedicated plant up and running to import ready-made guacamole straight from the avocado capital of the world as well every day of the year, not just Super Bowl Sunday."

Harvest Best Inc. Relocates to Pharr



Pictured are (l to r) : Evergreen Cold Storage Executives Gloria López and Andrés Zuñiga with new Harvest Best tenants Jacob Romero, Virginia Munoz and Nasser Halim.

The Pharr EDC proudly welcomes Harvest Best Inc. to the Pharr family as they expand and relocate their distribution facility into Evergreen Cold Storage. According to a recent article in The Produce News, "Harvest Best has trucks "rolling constantly" to have flexibility in shipping LTL orders to customers, who are heavy in the Northeast and Midwest. "We are aggressive in getting product off our floor" in Pharr, which also creates new sales and service opportunities enabling ourselves to react quickly to customer needs."

ECONOMIC TRENDS

City of Pharr Sales Tax

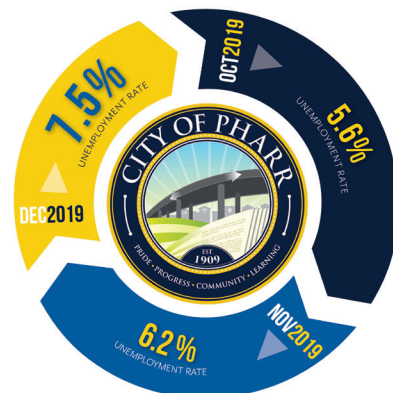
Growth Remains Resilient



Economic development efforts in Pharr have prioritized business attraction, expansion, and employment. The Pharr EDC is proud to continue to foster a pro-business culture that works together with investors to ensure they have everything they need to launch and maintain a successful company in Pharr. As such, our city continues to grow, and we have witnessed increases in households, jobs, and businesses that have all contributed to a 15% year-over-year increase in sales tax collections, the largest growth rate in the area when compared to other neighboring cities.

City of Pharr Unemployment

Last 3 Months of 2019



Pharr has experienced tremendous business and economic growth over the past year, which has resulted in the lowest unemployment rates the city has seen in over a decade! The Pharr EDC is committed to economic excellence, and we have continued to focus our efforts on enhancing entrepreneurship and business growth in our city by hosting workshops, providing skills and resource trainings, and partnering with our state and federal partners to enhance job opportunities. We are proud to connect our local businesses with employees from our area who are qualified, skilled, and ready to work!

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Pharr EDC Proudly Hosts Jingle & Mingle Mixer

Another great year is in the books for the City of Pharr and Pharr EDC! Annually, the Pharr EDC hosts an end of the year appreciation event honoring our business community and partners for their continued support. Due to the tremendous growth of our city, the event outgrew the annual Tamalada, and became an evening celebration. We greatly value our business and community partners and sincerely appreciate their continued support throughout the year. We look forward to a great new year ahead in 2020!



Caminata de la Paz

Every day individuals are faced with waves of turmoil, for this reason, the Caminata de Paz was created to advocate for acceptance and support of one another within our community. Hosted by the Pharr EDC and the Greater Pharr Chamber of Commerce through our Tourism & Events Manager, Myrta Tijerina, the annual event took place during the early morning of Saturday, December 14, 2019. The free community event invited community members and local faith-based organizations to gather in unison for the celebration of peace. Attendees met at the St. Jude Catholic Church to begin the almost two-and-a-half-mile walk towards the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle. Throughout the path, the group chanted prayers and hymns in support of more peaceful communities and positive relations; the walk concluded with a mass open to the public.

Thank You, Veterans!



Pictured (l to r): San Juan City Commissioner Markie Villegas, Ranulfo Marquez, PSJA SW Early College High School Principal, Hidalgo Co. Pct. 2 Constable Martin Cantu, State Representative Armando Martinez, Pharr City Commissioner Bobby Corillo, State Representative Sergio Muñoz, Jr., Probate Court Judge JoAnne Garcia, State Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr., Dr. Jorge L. Arredondo, Master Court #1 Judge Nereida Lopez-Singleton, Pharr EDC Executive Director Victor Perez, PSJA ISD Trustee Carlos Villegas, Pharr City Commissioner Ricardo Medina, Pharr City Commissioner Daniel Chavez, Pharr EDC Board Vice-President Mario Lizcano, Reynaldo Perez, Pharr EDC Board Secretary, and PSJA ISD Superintendent, and Abram Estrada, PSJA SW Early College High School.

Veterans are courageous individuals that have placed other people and their country before themselves, to protect our civil liberties. The Pharr EDC was proud to partner alongside the City of Pharr and PSJA ISD to take part in the "Vessel Project: Lunch with A Veteran". This event honored Veterans from all military branches for their dedicated service to our nation. Local leaders and PSJA ISD Students were able to personally thank and converse with Veterans to receive an insight and learn firsthand about their experience. Veterans enjoyed a complimentary meal and presentation in their honor. On behalf of our EDC Board of Directors and staff we continue to be forever grateful for their service.